

## **Smith HB 6519**

Dear PHC Members,

**I URGE YOU TO PASS A LAW REQUIRING LABELING OF GMOs ON OUR FOOD, AT A MINIMUM!** Let me preface my comments by telling you that I am not intimidated by or fearful of new science. I graduated from Dartmouth College with a major in chemistry and went on to get two masters degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). I have had a lot of work experience in the sciences, including working as a chemist for Pfizer, Inc., teaching chemistry at Choate Rosemary Hall, and working for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to name a few.

Both my children suffer from food allergies. My daughter was born allergic to milk, soy and eggs. My son stops breathing if he eats peanuts and is also severely allergic to tree nuts. He suffers from other immune system disorders as well, including asthma and eczema. Food allergies create a logistical nightmare trying to keep him safe, not to mention well-adjusted. Flying in airplanes, eat in restaurants or at friends' houses, reading labels every time I buy any food product, social issues when people are not understanding, his self-esteem issues, travel restrictions (You can't hike Mt. Washington if you might need an ambulance. Can't accompany my husband on surgery missions to third world countries if there is no labeling on food or emergency medical care.), etc. If you don't have truly life threatening food allergies in the family, you really can't understand. It is a life-changing nightmare. I am constantly trying to keep my children safe on many levels, and knowing exactly what is in their food is a big part of that. Now I have to try to protect them from GMOs, too? Please make that easier for me by 1) labeling my food for GMOs or better yet 2) getting rid of GMOs altogether! It turns out that GMOs likely are contributing to if not causing the childhood epidemic in food allergies today.

I compare what is happening today with GMOs to our history with leaded gasoline, agent orange, DDT (and other endocrine disruptors), etc. When will it stop? The fact that GMOs are so pervasive in our food supply with almost no independent safety testing is a moral outrage equal to all the rest. After working in the federal government for over 5 years, I learned that our representatives do not protect us nearly enough. **STEP UP.** At least pass this meager law on labeling. To not allow the consumer to easily choose whether or not to consume GMOs is absolutely ludicrous. These American companies have already changed their labeling in Europe – why not here? Are Europeans worthier consumers than Americans?

Even without the special issue of food allergies, going to the grocery store feels like a dangerous proposition. We used to think that all we had to worry about were natural occurring dietary hazards, such as saturated fat and too much salt. To feed our family as safely as we are able in this country involves a lot more today. Now we must avoid trans fats, which were supposed to be so wonderful for us and are now considered the worst fat ever. Tuna and other big fish are chock full of mercury, fertility-impacting PCBs, and other harmful chemicals that are stored in fat. I recently learned that shrimp, something I used to buy because they are small and

haven't bioaccumulated as much pollution yet, are sometimes fed manure. This is gross enough in itself, but the manure is often contaminated with salmonella and other nasty surprises. I need to make sure the milk I buy comes from cows that haven't been treated with antibiotics, are treated nicely, and have been fed non-GMO feed that hasn't been treated with pesticides. Chicken and eggs need to be free-range AND humanely-raised ("cage free" doesn't ensure the chickens go outside). As with milk or beef, our poultry products also need to be from animals that haven't been treated with antibiotics and were fed non-GMO feed that hasn't been treated with pesticides. We need to shop for only organic fruits and vegetables so that we aren't feeding our kids pesticides and GMOs.

These "miracles of science" leave me feeling helpless, wondering how am I supposed to feed my children safe food? How is any mother supposed to feel like she is doing the best for her kids? Why aren't you stopping corporations from making profits on products that ruin the health of innocent children? The least you can do, if you're not going to protect our food supply, is to implement CLEAR LABELING of GMOs and other undesirable ingredients so that we can opt to protect ourselves.

Sincerely,

Wendy Jastremski Smith